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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by 3HO Foundation, Asian Women in Cooperative Development Forum, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, Canadian Federation of University Women, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, Country Women Association of Nigeria, European Union of Women, European Women's Lobby, Femmes Afrique solidarité, General Arab Women Federation, International Alliance of Women, International Association for Women's Mental Health, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of University Women, International Federation of Women Lawyers, International Women's Year Liaison Group, Korean Institute for Women and Politics, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Soroptimist International, Temple of Understanding, Women's Federation for World Peace, Women's International Zionist Organization, Women's World Summit Foundation and Worldwide Organization for Women, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The Spanish Society for the Advancement of International Human Rights Law (SSIHRL), with the support of the Catalonian Agency for Cooperation to Development, adopted on 30 October 2006 the "Luarca Declaration on the Human Right to Peace" as the culmination of a process of extensive consultations with Spanish civil society, including the organization of six expert seminars in different regions[1].

Following the adoption of the Luarca Declaration, the SSIHRL has continued the process of consultations with international civil society through the organization of conferences and expert seminars on the human right to peace in all regions of the world[2]. In February 2009 the SSIHRL will call for a World NGO Conference in Geneva to take stock of inputs received from international civil society and to adopt the final text of the Universal Declaration on the Human Right to Peace. The new text will thus better represent the aspirations of civil society as a whole. The text will be further submitted to the competent UN human rights bodies urging them to initiate the formal codification of the human right to peace.

On 15 March 2007 the Luarca Declaration was first submitted to the fourth session of the Human Rights Council in an oral statement by UNESCO Etxea on behalf of the SSIHRL. It has been complemented by written statements submitted to the fourth session (A/HRC/4/NGO/85, of 8 March 2007), the fifth session (A/HRC/5/NGO/9, of 6 June 2007) and the sixth session of the HR Council (A/HRC/6/NGO/33 and A/HRC/6/NGO/34 of 5 September 2007). They were endorsed by a growing number of non-governmental organizations.

Moreover, several parallel meetings were organized at the Palais de Nations in Geneva during the sessions of the HR Council. Firstly, on 15 March 2007, both the SSIHRL and the International Society of Human Rights (Frankfurt) called for an open Information Meeting on the Luarca Declaration. Secondly, on 16 March 2007 the SSIHRL organised a technical meeting with NGO and human rights experts with a view to building a common strategy for a world-wide campaign on the human right to peace. Thirdly, on 11 June 2007 both UNESCO Etxea and SSIHRL organised an additional parallel event focused on the relationship between peace and solidarity rights[3]. Fourthly, on 12 September 2007 a roundtable on the legal content of the human right to peace was organised by

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[1] The regional expert seminars took place in Oviedo (27-28 July 2006), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (17-18 August 2006), Bilbao (15-16 September 2006), Madrid (21-22 September 2006), Barcelona (28-29 September 2006) and Seville (13-14 October 2006).

[2] Conferences and expert seminars have already taken place in Geneva (NGO World Conference on Reform of International Institutions, November 2006); Mexico City (December 2006); Bogota, Barcelona and Addis Ababa (March 2007); Caracas and Santo Domingo (April 2007); Morelia (Mexico, 12 May 2007), Bogota (12 May 2007), Oviedo and Santa Fe (New Mexico, United States of America, 16-17 May 2007); Washington (14 June 2007), Nairobi (15 June 2007), Geneva (28 June 2007), Strasbourg (2-5 July 2007), Feldkirch (Austria, 31 August 2007), Geneva (11, 12 and 21 September 2007), Luarca (28 September 2007), Madrid (23 October 2007), Monterrey (1 November 2007) and México City (5 December 2007).

[3] Panellists were representatives of the World Organization Against Torture, the International Society of Human Rights, UNESCO Etxea and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

SSIHRL with collaboration of UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva [4]. And fifthly, on 21 September 2007 the SSIHRL organised the commemoration of the International Day of Peace at the Council Chamber of the Palais de Nations[5].

Women's peace movements have raised major issues on war around the world, notably when war and conflict situations have been increasing. Without doubt, these movements to wage peace have been able to accomplish significant and historical inroads in impacting public opinion. For instance, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on bringing a gender perspective into peace negotiations is an evident outcome of this movement.

Unfortunately, inequality is particularly gendered in war and conflict which severely compromises women's right to sustainable development. Even though women provide the unpaid service in times of peace such as search for water and the preparation of food and energy conservation, inequality is intensified during conflict since peacekeeping infrastructure is often destroyed.

Along with the deepening violence women experience during war, the long-term effects of conflict and militarization create a culture of violence that renders women especially vulnerable after war, because institutions of governance and law are weakened and social fragmentation is pronounced. The maintenance of peace and security is crucial for the protection of the human rights of women and girl children, as well as for the elimination of all forms of violence against them and of their use as a weapon of war[6].

The interest of involving women and girls in the peace processes often stems from their experiences of armed conflict, whether primarily as victims or as armed participants. They are aware of the potentials for transformation and reform in periods of peacemaking. As the Platform for Action of Beijing indicates "the girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow. The skills, ideas and energy of the girl child are vital for full attainment of the goals of equality, development and peace."[7]

Women have a unique opportunity to become organized in peace movements to focus on shared social experiences. Women have common barriers based on cultural relativism and thus create networks of solidarity that are able to cross invisible borders. The Forward-looking Strategies on Equality, Development and Peace of Nairobi states that women should be completely integrated into the development process in order to strengthen peace and security in the world. Thus, the realization

[4] Panellists included members of the International Federation of University Women, Geneva School of Diplomacy, the Chairperson of the WG on Mercenaries, the Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity and the former Chairperson of the HR Council.

[5] Statements were made by representatives of the following NGOs and IOs: Brahma Kumaris University, Geneva School of Diplomacy, Amnesty International (Geneva Section), UNIDIR, UNICEF and UNESCO.

[6] The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, *Action for Equality, Development and Peace*, Beijing, China, 1995, paragraph 12.

[7] The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, supra n. 7, paragraph 39.

of equal rights for women at all levels and in all areas of life contributes to the achievement of a just and lasting peace[8].

The most critical deterrent to the right to peace, however, is the inequality that remains in the mental attitudes and behaviour that perpetuate the notion of power that deprives others of the enjoyment of their basic human rights and human dignity. It follows that equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. The preamble of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women highlights that "the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields."

As Article 14 of the 2006 Luarca Declaration on the Human Right to Peace states:

"1. All persons belonging to vulnerable groups have the right to an analysis of the specific effects on enjoyment of their rights of the different forms of violence to which they are subject, and to the adoption of measures in that respect, including recognition of their right to participate in the adoption of those measures.

2. In particular, the specific contribution of women to the peaceful settlement of disputes shall be promoted".

We therefore urge the United Nations to involve more women in the promotion of international co-operation, the development of friendly relations among nations, the strengthening of international peace and disarmament[9]. We also urge all Member States of the United Nations to take meaningful steps to recognize the positive impact of gender approach in relation to the human right to peace. In this connection, we welcome the UN Security Council call to reaffirm the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and to stress the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution[10].

[8] Decade for women: Equality, Development and Peace, *Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women*, A/RES/40/108, 13 December 1985,UN General Assembly.

[9] Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women, Adopted at the World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, Mexico, 19 June-2 July 1975.

[10] UN Security Council, S/RES/1325, 31 October 2000.